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TO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

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SUBJ: INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION AFFAIRS

REFS: MEXICO 5393, 5602, 5649, 5679

GENEVA FOR LOS DEL AMBASSADOR MCKERNAN

1. ACCORDING TO DIRECTOR OF INVESTIGATIONS OF IATTC, MEXICAN IATTC COMMISSIONERS UNAWARE OF CASTRO Y CASTRO'S EFFORTS TO CHANGE ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE, AND SEVERAL OF THEM HAVE COMMITMENTS MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO MEET IN JANUARY. PERHAPS WE SHOULD GIVE THEM TIME TO STRAIGHTEN THIS OUT AMONG THEMSELVES. WE EXPECT THAT CANADA AND JAPAN WOULD ALSO HAVE TROUBLE WITH JANUARY SCHEDULE BECAUSE OF CONFLICT WITH IMPORTANT ICNAF MEETING.

2. REFTELS ON CASTRO Y CASTRO'S SUGGESTION OF VISIT BY
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AMBASSADOR MCKERNAN HAVE BEEN REPEATED TO GENEVA FOR

LATTER'S CONSIDERATION. IT WOULD OF COURSE BE HELPFUL TO HAVE MORE SPECIFICS ON ANTICIPATED CONTENT OF FRANK AND FRIENDLY EXCHANGE OF VIEWS. IMPRESSION GAINED FROM DISCUSSION WITH IATTC DIRECTOR IS THAT CASTRO Y CASTRO AND MEDINA NERI ARE JOCKEYING FOR LEADING ROLE IN MEXICAN INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES AFFAIRS, AND PROPOSAL FOR MCKERNAN VISIT MAY BE GRAND-STANDING PLOY IN CASTRO'S PERSONAL CAMPAIGN.

3. WE HAVE DIFFICULTY MAKING SENSE OF MEDINA NERI'S REPORTED COMMENTS ON MEXICO'S POSITION FOR IATTC. IN SITUATION WHERE US IS BUILDING ADDITIONAL VESSEL CAPACITY FASTER THAN MEXICO, THERE IS NO RATIONAL WAY THAT COUNTRY ALLOCATIONS PROPORTIONAL TO FLEET SIZE COULD BENEFIT MEXICO. AS FOR QUOTAS, THERE IS ONLY ONE QUOTA IN IATTC SYSTEM, I.E. OVERALL CATCH QUOTA FOR YELLOW-FIN TUNA WHICH IS DETERMINED BY WHAT RESOURCE CAN PRODUCE. THERE IS EQUAL ALLOCATION OF 6000 TONS WHICH MAY BE CAUGHT DURING CLOSED SEASON BY SMALL (UNDER 400 TONS CAPACITY) VESSELS OF EACH COUNTRY, DESPITE FACT THAT US HAS MORE SUCH VESSELS THAN ALL OTHER COUNTRIES COMBINED. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS 12,000 TON QUOTA FOR MEXICO IN SENSE THAT MEXICO IS LIMITED BY IATTC SYSTEM TO THAT LEVEL OF CATCH. FACT IS THAT MEXICO HAS BEEN GIVEN SPECIAL ALLOCATION FOR 1973 ONLY OF 6000 TONS TO BE CAUGHT DURING CLOSED SEASON BY CERTAIN DISTRESSED LARGE MEXICAN VESSELS, AND THUS HAS BEEN GIVEN IN EFFECT GUARANTEE OF OPPORTUNITY TO CATCH 12,000 TONS OF YELLOW-FIN TUNA FREE OF ALL CONSERVATION RESTRICTIONS PLUS WHATEVER CAN BE CAUGHT IN EQUAL COMPETITION WITH OTHER NATIONS' FLEETS. THIS IS FAVORABLE TREATMENT WHICH NO OTHER MEMBER COUNTRY HAS ENJOYED. IF TAKEN AT FACE VALUE, MEDINA NERI'S COMMENTS TO PRESS SEEM TO INDICATE THAT MEXICO IS PREPARED TO SCRAP IATTC CONSERVATION PROGRAM, UNDER WHICH MEXICO'S TUNA INDUSTRY HAS PROSPERED AND GROWN, IN ORDER THAT ALL PLANNED NEW VESSELS CAN FISH WITHOUT RESTRAINT. IF TRUE, THIS WOULD INDEED BE SHORT-SIGHTED DECISION, AS PREDICTABLE EFFECT OF RESULTING OVERFISHING WOULD BE RAPID LOSS OF PROFITABILITY FOR FLEETS OF ALL COUNTRIES, INCLUDING MEXICO'S.

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4. WE INCLINE TO BELIEVE THAT THIS MUSCLE-FLEXING IS IN FACT DESIGNED TO SOFTEN UP US AND OTHER MEMBER COUNTRIES FOR GOM DEMAND FOR ENLARGED SPECIAL ALLOCATIONS FOR 1974, PROBABLY AROUND 25,000 TONS OF YELLOW-FIN. OWING TO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN US TUNA INDUSTRY, PARTICULARLY INCREASING ASSUMPTION BY US CANNERS OF BOAT OWNER ROLE, IT IS EXTREMELY DOUBTFUL THAT US

COMMISSIONERS WILL FIND IT POSSIBLE TO AGREE TO
CONTINUATION OF PRESENT SPECIAL ALLOCATION TO MEXICO,
LET ALONE INCREASE IT. COMMISSION THEREFOR PROBABLY
FACES UNPRECEDENTED CRUNCH AT NEXT ANNUAL MEETING,
WHICH FOR THAT REASON SHOULD BE COMMENCED AS EARLY AS
POSSIBLE, IF THERE IS TO BE ANY HOPE OF TIMELY AGREEMENT
ON A CONSERVATION REGIME FOR NEXT YEAR. ROGERS

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